Masana Chennappa is a poet of varied themes...
He selects the subject of his poetry in advance...
Though plain in saying, touching the heart is his quality...
A proper mix of wit and depth is a speciality in him.

Dr. C. Narayana Reddy

EYE - RISE

Original (TELUGU) : NETRODAYAM
By MASANA CHENNAPPA



TRANSLATORS:

USHA K. SRINIVAS
K. SRINIVASA SASTRY

EYE - RISE

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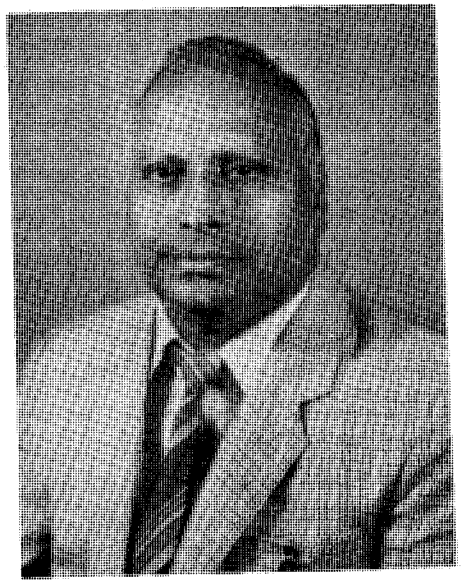
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FORE WORD

Translation from one language into another, especially poetry, that too, where culture contexts are different, is almost an impossible task. Still an attempt has been made here to do the impossible.

Dr. M. Chennappa's poems in Telugu are thought- provoking. They are made available to a wider range of readers through translation into English. In addition, non-Telugu readers will get an idea of how deep and strong feelings can be expressed in Telugu in lucid style by use of simple words. An attempt has been made all along to retain this simple and lucid style by the use of simple and proper English equivalents for the Telugu words.

In spite of a conscious effort, the sonority of poetry in one language cannot be maintained in its translation into another language. For example, in the poem, "Lightning", the first six lines end with "antha" meaning "that much" or "as much as". But the sonority that "antha" has at the end of each line cannot be had with "as much as". Similarly, maintaining the same word-order or stanza-order in the translation as in the original Telugu poem, in places, leads to awkward constructions. Again, for example, in the Telugu poem, "Vennela", moonlight is repeated at the end of each stanza, whereas in English translation, "Moonlight", it has to be used at the beginning of the stanza to convey its full impact. Therefore, wherever it is unaviodable, the word-order or stanza-order has been modified.

The circumstances that prompted us and got us interested in translating Dr. M. Chennappa's **Netrodayam** *into English is a story by itself. Translating a poem or a stanza from Telugu into English without losing the meaning and word-order is one thing. And inducing poetic spirit into the translation is another. Working together to accomplish this has been an experience.*

We are thankful to Dr. M. Chennappa for giving us this opportunity to translate his work into English.

Usha K. Srinivas
K. Srinivasa Sastry

OTHER WORKS BY Dr. MASANA CHENNAPPA

Malli Padalu (Poetry) 1980

Veturi Prabhakara Sastry Vangmaya Suchika (Criticism) 1985

Prachina Kavyalu - Gramina Jeevana Chitrana (Criticism) 1991

Netrodayam (Poetry) 1995

Samalochanam (Criticism) 1995

Brihadgita (Transcreation of Brihadaranyakopanishad) 1997

Brahmacharyam (Prose) 1999

Amritha Svaralu (Poetry) 1999

Prakriti Purusha Vivekam (Translation) 1999

Agnisvaralu (Poetry) 2000

Sarasvatha Lochanam (Criticism) 2001

Eesavasyam (Transcreation of Eesavasyopanishad) 2001

In this ...

Non-duality

I know
you are a plant that broke out of hard rock
star that shines in difficulties' darknesses

you are the seashore that faced and survived
the ebb-tide and flood-tide of the ocean
you are the lone tree that bowed down and
survived the tornado

you are the umbrella that provided shade to several
in intense sorrow
you are the warp that hugged to the heart
pains and pleasures as woofs

you are the self-carved sculpture
ray of hope self-generated by rainbow

with undaunted courage
with undisturbed determination
faring-forward friend!
Yes you are me.

For that Moment

Timidity is axe-blow
without spilling blood
makes impotent

like a rented hovel in the city
mind searches for a nest
each day

while going to college
child's cry for belt
binds the waist

blue sky's cloud
barges
between eye-lids

To touch the cheeks of love
everyday beard
comes in the way

Dogs are barking in the street
as if stealing pleasure
breaking life's treasury

midnight's dream
surrounds like a net
like walking in the forest

how long
to wipe life- mirror?
To wait for the speck-less moment?

Like Me

Cloud is my companion
like me (it) rains love

Sun is my friend
like me (he) spreads equality

Tree is my relative
like me (it) gives
shade

River is my mate
like me (she) strikes
the deepest layers

Cuckoo is my love
like me (she) sings
life

Calendar

The year over
we bring (calendar) down from the wall
month after month, the sheets
we tear

with glances each date
we push into the granary of the past
all year long
milestones we dig deep

everyday our plight
hidden in the hearts
of golden diaries
we stow away in attics

but we don't know
that calendar is right behind us
and time is its tears

Poetry

Houses and thresholds
still more lakhs of shackles
none of these can tie down the pen

no balance can weigh
poetry's weight
no tape can measure
imaginations' tree

words have no legs
they run in poetry
words have no wings
they fly in poetry

that is why
poetry is no fun
its philosophy cannot be reached till the end.

Eye-rise

In front of the house
sitting alone on a swing-like cot
gazing at the stars in the dark
I am counting recollections

from the bank thither
thinking that near and dear will come
my looks in the threshold
I placed for patrol

from the ocean of difficulties
the mind -boat that won't move out
to anchor on the shore of dreams
I am fighting with time

knowing that there is no end
to the darkness that is like unshaven beard
to the life without sweetness
I dozed off to sleep

but, the moment I opened my eyes
appeared the sun-rise in the east
that to me is eye-rise

Song of peace

My surroundings
are making me a universal man

my arts
are spreading me to country after country

my dharma[1]
is making me a karma-yogi[2]

my faith
is keeping me as a man

even as song has tune
race has dharma

one's own eyes
one has to keep healthy
develop morality
to see truth as truth

humanity is perfume
of all the flowers having blossomed in profusion
humanity is moonlight handed
by the spreadout stars

the world should attain the superstate
where humanity commands existence
on the world-veena's[3] strings
my race should sing the song of peace.

---

1. dharma : impersonal duty
2. karma-yogi : man of action
3. veena : an Indian stringed musical instrument

Head of the Domain

In the rooms of secretariat
in felicitation-assemblies
are you looking forward
to a high seat?
For laying foundation-stones
coming with might
do you secure yourself
in stone-slabs?
Far from practice
throwing conscience away
do you go away submitting
useless words?
For the famine-distressed
for the abundance-stricken
do you shed tears on TV
greeting (them) on radio?
Five years of position
which is like five-year plan
do you dedicate
to your own folks?
In the embraces of AC rooms
do you spend away time without knowing?
Cheating the innocent
do you prove 'sinner is long-lasting'?
Again and again for the seat
do you hanker?
on the earth's heart-domain
will you be the head?

Lamp - Poem

When the whole year
is thought to be a night
why only one day's day-time
why the heat of fire?

When all the time
becomes poison
what use is
just one drop of nectar?

When (one) walks on thorns
all the three hundred and sixty days
what does just one night's bed-of- flowers
accomplish?

Do the firecrackers change
this tricky world?
Do atomic bombs collapse
walls of blindness?

The custom and way of the human world
(are) a symbol of Narakasura[1]
does the flower-pot
fetch heavens?

Loser afflicted
with hunger, with loans
life is always a series of sorrows
a series of irremovable darknesses

only one day of Deepavali[2]
I reprehend with a no
urge that all time
become a series of brightnesses

1. Narakasura : A demon in Hindu mythology
2. Deepavali : A festival of lights

Into the People

Prevalent evils
increasing bossings
have you been seeing?

Bank robbery and lootings
terrible happenings in security zones
have you been watching?

When hatred is increasing
when nation is burning
are you wrestling
with books constantly?

Are you observing
the leaders who bring loans
from world nations
and stealing people's money?

Intellectual!

How long is this stillness for you
buckle up at least now
step in, join people.

Foundation

If brick upon
brick is placed
(it) is wall

if word after
word is composed
(it) is song

baked brick
is strong
song that comes from bottom (of the heart)
lasts forever

whatever kind the wall is
foundation is truly essential !

Whatever kind the song is
fits the refrain!

Wall and song are only one
you and I are only one

Town

This is town sir
here people are too many
wrestle with existences
friendship with mosquitoes

yesterday's newspapers
day before yesterday's chappals
those selling them
those depending on them only

those unaware of hunger
those left restless
those who don't land jobs
for certificates' hooks

householders who treat
guests and near
and dear to a cup of tea
owners who increase house rent
even before receipt of increment

pubs in public
movie-lands next to one another
AC rooms that make sun's heat cold
schools that welcome (those) who pour out thousands

this is a mechanical world
amusement that no one can imagine
if there are paise just for a cup of tea
you can be intimate with anybody!

Attempt

Excitement is glowing griddle
thought is burning bread
with very raw experiences
if (you) light the mind, it won't burn

in life's rainy season
every cry is a cloud
without attempt-sun
rainbow does not form

in the eye-circle
sights should not become straight lines
should become deer that gallop
exceeding limits

fortune is an oasis in the heart's desert
non-accessible-to-all
if (you) want to touch the earth's edge
you have to cross both valleys and peaks.

Ultimate aim

That everything gets destroyed
do we not use them?
That death is inevitable
do we stop eating?

Rising sun
knows that he sets

rushing river
knows the taste of salt

that withering is inevitable
flower doesn't stop blooming

that extinction is certain
lamp doesn't stop glowing

not only reflection
practising is important

preservation and destruction alone
(are) the meaning of creation.

Moonlight

Earth-bound me
to go and see the divine worlds
white horse sent by Indra[1]
is moonlight

moonlight is butter spread
on the rye- bread
moonlight is jasmine
flowering throughout the sky

moonlight is ice-cream
however much (one) eats, taste doesn't decrease
moonlight-nectar
however-much (one) drinks, thirst doesn't slake

that is why
how can (one) live without moonlight?
My mind that doesn't flower moonlight is pale!

1. Indra : The chief god of the early Hindu religion

Lightning

Time remaining for me is as much as a drop,
what is to be done is as much as the Sindhu[1]

the mental peace I found is as much as a seed
what is to be done is as much as a tree

fortune that approached me is as much as a ray
work planned is as much as the sun

reining time
fearing within myself
in the last moment when I was self-deceiving
flashed the lightning
that in the water-molecule is sea
that in the seed is tree
that in the ray is light.

1. Sindhu : a river in India.

What Justice Is This?

Even if AC rooms tie it down
even if fans' wings trouble it
air that finds it inconvenient
to tell anybody
for the child's fun
if elders blow it more
it will blow up the balloon itself.

Law that kneels at the feet
of people in position
however much rightfulness (it) shows
eats up the innocents' life.

Cactus

If I see cactus
it enrages me
between unclever plants
it is an awfully fattened tree
in society's forest
it is a mound of sins.

Standing straight
cactus that shows authority
with uncontrollable anger
with burning passion
the day when all the dry plants come united
cannot but fall with tap roots
cannot but die of pangs of hunger.

Let It Happen

Respect the men
who lead life
abandoning humanity
suppressing civility.

Honour the fierce ones
who fly banners of glory
in newspapers everyday
and bend heads for garlands

Cover the workmen with shawls
who complete the targets of the higher-up
with bribes
and pocket promotions.

Salute
the black coat
who is after filling the suitcase
however the good and bad of the case are.

Say those fellow-teachers are
the most revered ones
who know no interest in students
except the roar of salaries.

Worship (those)
who respect principles by rote
even switching parties
it is enough to stay in power.

Is there shortage of those who climb up and sit
if people who carry are there?
(They) have formed queues for felicitations
let it happen, let it happen.

Vow

I am a poem
composed by myself
on the sky paper

creating arcs of imagination
I regale the earth
in the lives of hunger-lands
I rain the ambrosia of letters

on the tree-brothers' branch-lips
I bloom smiles

in the path I travel
I make the overweening horns
taste hale
to the pleasure of rivers and rivulets
to the joy of new poets
I shower poetry.

Certain

Deny light it is darkness
deny progress it is regress
forget human he is animality
spoil humanity it is revenge.

To think of knocking down the tree
that carries you on its branch is stupidity
to cheat one who places trust
is rashness.

Stopping to nourish
milch cow
craving for powder milk
is laughable

Are those who hate the nation
citizens?
Are those who abuse mother
sons?

For one who fells the tree
for one who breaks the bund
if not today
tomorrow fall is certain.

Impressions

Hopes are flying
to build nests in the sky.

Memories are coming
like whirls
in the ocean.

At times
time breaks
stuck in the scissors.

These

Here consciousness
is solidified
in rooms, in men's hearts
darkness of ages and ages!

Here wherever you see
only dirty water is seen
here whoever does anything
appears as service to people.

A smash of new bills
once in five years in the hearts of huts
the innocents that are mesmerized
by intoxicating talks!

Walls here
do not have windows
life carts
do not have wheels.

(These are) Not the fortunate ones
who see the universe sitting at home
(these are) rafts that do not reach shore
unless they push themselves.

As it gets dark
(they) meet on the river bank
seeing the sky in water
forget the world itself.

These who do not know the order
between the stars that shine dimly
and the hopes without recognition
(are) futureless present
(are) doubts that don't find answer.

Star that Lit Again

Star that broke and fell long ago
(is) star with last breath left
those who rejoiced
that it came to their feet
those who made fun of it
that it survived in dirt
stopped seeing it
erased it from (their) memories.

But, recently
with difficulties themselves as teachers
in experience's wayside school
(it) has learnt letters.

With inward consciousness
(it) flew to the sky
as moon among stars
caused amazement

Dream-break

My nation is a land of vedas
my nation is a womb of gems
my nation is Kalpataru[1]

gold branches
nectar fruits
cool shadow

many, many
(make) attempts to axe
this tree

still
the land of Bharat is Kamadhenu[2]
rains boons themselves as milk
nation (is) green tree
flowers everlastingly

but
between common man's blank looks I'
stand lifeless.

1. *Kalpataru : The "wishing tree" in the Hindu paradise that grants every wish.*

2. *Kamadhenu : Mythological cow*

Synthesis

Tradition is backbone
truth itself is my perspective

accomplished sculptors
who endowed few letters
with great meanings
are my teachers

that which causes
comprehension
thought
experience union
above all heart vibration
is poetry

for poets of yesterday and today
my praise is certain
dome without foundation
mother earth doesn't accept

time itself creates the poet
poetry itself leads us all.

Comfort

Mother, don't cry mother
let there be no tears in eyes
that one son is gone
worries not for you mother!

Neighbour is a villain
has come to quarrel
in the night like a thief
has stood in battle.

To resist
our troops united
all the enemy armies dying
victory comes to our hand

the news of the war
made your son a hero
increasing the desire for revenge
pulled him to war

indeed you are the mother
who gave him the milk of manliness
then itself you said
that my son was a lion

to punish the enemies
he joined the army
to protect the land of Bharat
he stood taking a vow

Why are you worried mother!
The ends of the earth
recognise you son's bravery
praise (his) virtues

doesn't one sharp axe
fell many trees?
Doesn't one atom of manly-fire
burn the enemies?

Because of the unlit lamp
does the invasion of darkness stop?
Even if the cowards are ten thousand
isn't one hero enough?

That he disappeared
even without saying a word
don't be angry at your son
don't abuse our friend

not one for you mother
we are all your sons
victory is ours, victory is ours
don't grieve, mother!

Desire

Let not the stars cast off by the famous
meet in the dark
let not the cows that give fragrant milk
be sacrificed to the sword

let not the tree that yields sweet fruits
collapse by earthquakes
let not the mangalya* around the lady's neck
change into a halter

let not the poets who drive the chariot of equality
yield to forces of selfishness
let not the people in the free nation
live as slaves

* *mangalya : sacred thread tied around the woman's neck at the time of marriage.*

Do Not Forget

O friend, don't run
falling and rising don't run
(you are) one who doesn't know the way
even if (you) go ahead of me,
you don't reach the destination.

don't run blindly don't run
"delay renders nectar poison"
I too may not deny
but, if (you) think a little
even poison can become nectar

what is that run?
Don't run leaving the ground
if (you) fall touching the side
there won't be anybody to hold and lift you

when (you) can't have boiling milk
a mouthful of water is enough
porridge is better
than the nectar (you) can't reach.

Some More Malli-verses

Bringing flowers called hearts
threading them as one
praising mother-earth
Malli, place it around (my) neck!

Giving up hatred
protecting the nation
Malli, all people
should live united!

A garden (where) many stop
a word (that) many say
a path (that) many walk
is secure, Malli!

Malli, praise
farmer in the field
soldier on the boundary
a true leader!

One that is not effaced even when erased
one that does not sing false notes
the sweetest in creation
is friendship only, Malli!

Guest

Into the sky came
a star as guest
seeing the star's beauty
the sky sparkled

into the lake came
a tender lotus as light
looking at the charm of the lotus
the lake rejoiced

into the sea came
a wave moving
seeing the wave the sea
frolicked

into the a beautiful grove came
a cuckoo
listening to the cuckoo's song
the whole grove danced

into the dumb veena's mind came
a tune
listening to the tune the dumb veena
sang regaining consciousness

into the poet-son's pen came
an idea
in the progressive song
it sparkled becoming a letter.

(You) Have to Light Hopes

O friend
don't fear
don't grieve

one day in life's sky
lights cannot but rise
in the hope-lake
thousand petals cannot but bloom

make time favourable
fire ignites the faggot
frozen emotion
melts and becomes canals

you
avoiding hurdle thorns
have to pluck experience-roses
in despair's deep darkness itself
(you) have to light hopes.

Futile

Looking into vacuum
thinking futile thoughts
don't say you are philosopher

keeping a few books in front
ruminating a few words
don't flood criticism

if (you) hold the umbrella
it is not lifting Govardhana[1]
if (you) don't have increasing delight
new poetry will not come

a good-hearted man is greater than a poet
criticism devoid of sympathy is a burnt boat.

1. Govardhana : a mountain in Hindu mythology
lifted by Lord Krishna

Difference

That
house is mine
farm-land is mine
these children are mine
this is yesterday's saying

that
nation is mine
race is mine
these people are mine
this is today's saying

Can't You See the Life-Path?

You starve
you fall and get up
you say sir, for you
I am slave.

At the field
even if there is work
the hearth won't be
lit in the house.

You rise before the day breaks
you run behind the bulls
you don't wait for morning meal
you work with a wakeful mind.

Even after seeing the bull's horns
you appear as if blunted
even when the day breaks everyday
your life is one with no day-break!

Behind the buffaloes, behind the sheep
in all kinds of narrow lanes
even if there are thorny bushes you keep running
can't you see the life-path?

You see flowers, you see milk
you see rising and overflowing rivers
you don't
set flowers in hair, you don't drink milk
can't you see the life-path?

Flood

Ocean itself getting angry
came moving
spread its fangs
to drown the corner land.
Earth's sky-land
became barren
filled Annapurna's* eyes
with tears
ruined
green crops
ran away
punishing the villages
what a hard heart
this sea has?
Caused turmoil
in hard workers' life.
How unkind
this nature is!
Went away swallowing
its own offspring.
Destroyed the very lives
of handicraftsmen
took the lives
of the weavers.
The consuming fire within
quenching the thirst
the sky rose
came as a flood.

Annapurna : goddess of food

Turn Away, Devil of Religion!

Is your prowess on the innocents
who toil and moil?
Is your anger on the poor
who can't even afford food and clothing?

Craving for authority
now and then gives you life
in the lives of the unlucky
rains fires.

Having you as support
in the forest of society
thorny trees are growing
goat like lions are roaming.

If many are together
it is stomach-burn for you
if (you) see happy lives
your eyes explode

With infants' lives
you play?
In a fully pregnant woman's womb
drawn swords?

Either that man or this man
whoever it is

isn't the dead one a human?
When goons are leaders
what is the shortage for house burnings?
When politics is full of rowdies
where is the check for knife stabs?

Four hundred years of history
you have drowned in the Musi river
on to the bastions of Charminar
you have invited vultures themselves.

Turn away, devil of religion!
Don't you appear again
igniting fire among men
don't think of warming up.

Universe's Lament

Protect the environment
live for eternity
plastic flower has trampled on
the flowers that spread fragrance
factory-devil has drunk
the air that sustains life.

You who drink pollution in pots
step into nature for a while
recognize the sweet bond
between man and the globe.

Do you, who don't plant even a sapling,
fell big trees?
Do you, who don't shed even a tear for
creation of the universe, defy the earth?

For you who don't look at the surroundings
positions in the department of environment?
Are you who run towards the Deluge
children of Nature?

Because of you, nature
turns into a scare-crow
this universe laments
how your existence will be tomorrow.